

## **Week of December 30, 2002: MaineDOT Flash Facts**

### **Topic: New Years Holiday Safety**

**Closers:** (throughout the week) Many people will be traveling this holiday week and MaineDOT reminds you to be a "Road Model" and drive safely.

Flash, the MDOT safety Road Model reminds you "When driving - Just Drive!"

#### **Facts/Openers:**

-About 1000 crashes occur annually in Maine from Christmas Eve through New Year's Day with an annual average of 4 fatalities and over 350 injuries.

In Maine during the past 5 Christmas through New Year's holiday periods:

-There was a total of over 5,000 crashes, 19 fatalities and over 1,800 injuries. Some of the problems on the road during this holiday period were:

- More than 1,500 crashes (about 1/3) occurred when the driver was distracted or inattentive. Nine people died and about another 600 were injured.

- More than 1,100 crashes resulted from excessive or unsafe speed. Nine people died and about another 600 were injured.

- More than 600 crashes with large animals (Deer and Moose) resulting in 20 injuries.

- Nearly 250 crashes involved driving while impaired by alcohol or drugs. 4 people died and another 180 were injured in these crashes.

- More than 70 crashes due to the driver being asleep or fatigued resulted in over 30 injuries.

-Many people will be taking long trips to see family and friends. If you are traveling, make sure that you and your vehicle are ready for the trip.

-Whether you are off to a party, skiing for the day or on an extended holiday trip, make sure you travel safely, and if you drink, don't drive!

#### **Monday:**

New Year's Eve is tomorrow.

#### **Tips:**

Celebrate, have fun, enjoy being with family and friends, but...Don't Drink and Drive.

If you plan to drink, line up a designated driver before going out, or stay overnight.

Some Maine Law reminders:

- No driver or passenger can consume alcohol or possess an open alcoholic container.

- Maine has a zero tolerance alcohol law for drivers under 21 years old. (If you are found with any blood alcohol content, you can be convicted of operating a motor vehicle while under the influence, with severe penalties including loss of driver's license for at least one year, a stiff fine and possible jail time.)

- Maine law considers drivers over 21 years old to be Under the Influence if their Blood Alcohol Content (BAC) is 0.08%. Those convicted lose their license, may serve jail time and receive stiff fines.

Have plenty of rest before driving.

Drive defensively:

- You may be doing everything right, but if someone else does something wrong on the road, it could be a very big problem for you!
- Watch the road well ahead for potential problems. (Watch for vehicles; pedestrians; changing road conditions; and deer and moose)
- Be ready to take safe, evasive maneuvers if someone else leaves their lane, loses control in some way or makes some other driving error.

### **Wednesday:**

#### **Tips:**

Happy New Year's! **For 2003, make a resolution to be a Road Model.** Based on recent crash trends, here are some other resolutions that can keep many travelers alive:

- Travel at a speed that's right for the conditions. That means obeying speed limits, and slowing down in the following situations: Snowy, Icy or Wet Roads; Darkness; Fog; Terrain with Hills and Curves; Unfamiliar Areas.
- When you're driving, just drive. Think about driving situations that lie ahead. Paying attention to anything other than your driving can seriously delay your reaction to an on-the-road emergency and make the difference between a safe uneventful trip and a disastrous crash. Distractions can lead to a missed stop sign; hitting a stopped or slowing vehicle ahead; missing a curve and driving off the road and into a ditch, tree, or utility pole; or not noticing movements of large animals ahead until it is too late.

### **Friday:**

#### **Tips:**

How are you doing on your New Year's resolution to be a Road Model? Some basic tips that will help keep your resolution include:

- Keep your eyes on the road, and get the whole driving picture. Regularly scan the road ahead, the sides of the road, and check your mirrors. Anticipate what will happen next.
- Maintain a safe following distance between you and the vehicle ahead. Increase that following distance when weather, visibility or road conditions are poor.
- Despite the mistakes made by others on the road, keep your cool.
- Be courteous to all road users including bicyclists and pedestrians.
- We still have a lot of winter ahead. Drive only when necessary and **go slow** during storms and when road surfaces are slippery.